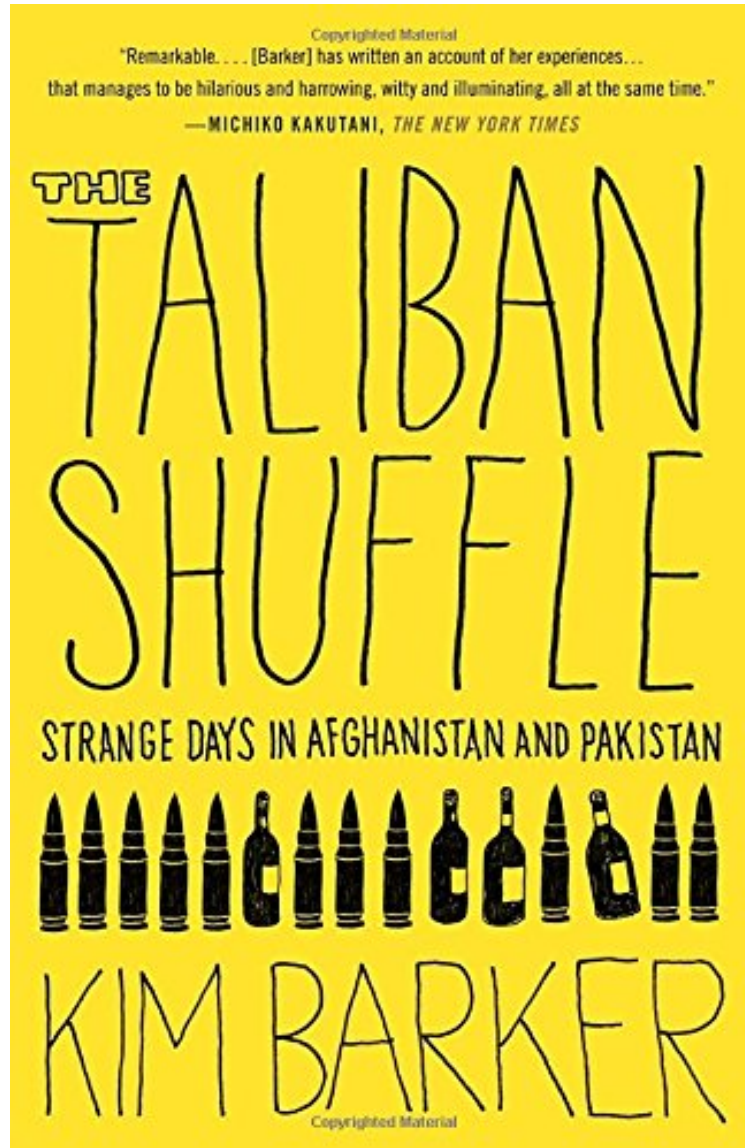


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Kim Barker

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Kim Barker : The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Taliban Shuffle: Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan:

50 of 50 people found the following review helpful. Both More and Less than You Might ExpectBy Doug Bowker3.5 STARS if that were possible.Many, like me, probably will pick this book up after watching the movie Whiskey, Tango, Foxtrot with Tina Fey. From that perspective I was both disappointed AND rewarded. If you've read other non-

fiction accounts in the many political and military hotspots around the world, then you will most likely enjoy what is recounted here. If on the other hand 99% of what you read is fiction and you generally like to keep it light, I doubt this book will be your thing. I fall firmly into the former category and love books by journalists who are willing to go right to the edge in order to make sure the world doesn't ignore what's important. I believe Kim Barker did her best to be one of these journalists, but sadly wasn't taken as seriously (because of being a woman) both on the ground and back home where journalism of this kind was drying up. COMPARISONS: The movie is much more linear and the scripting/story arc greatly tightened up. Plus it's funnier. On the other hand this book is so much more interesting and three dimensional than the movie, which in reality takes only about 1/3 of the book as it's source material. It also puts much more emphasis on the romantic and sexual relationships of the author, which in the book hardly happen at all. The movie almost makes these as primary plot movers, and it's obvious that they were all little more than tangential to Ms. Barker in her real life. Towards the end of the book she basically admits that writing the book was as much a form of PTSD self-therapy as anything else. That doesn't invalidate the writing at all, but it does point out that it's not the sort of book that has a "story" or over-arching theme to follow. It's just like a lot of life and meaning isn't always easy to wring out of it. In that light, the book is definitely uneven at times, and rambles all around. But it is also honest and inciteful, and an important voice against the apathy and dumbing down of US foreign journalism. It's partly an indictment against the lazy and often deadly approach the US takes to its foreign policy, though this judgment is not partisan, nor does it let the countries in question off the hook. It's because she ends up loving Afghanistan that she becomes so disillusioned by it's leaders and competing factions. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. very good insight into an area of the world where there can be no winners and the loser is the USA By Bruce Wolf this book provides very good insight into the chaos of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is written with a so-so first person style. However, it gave me considerable information about the disastrous situation in this part of the world and how the United States has again been dragged into a war where there can be no winners and where the national leaders have only a very selfish agenda for survival and becoming rich. Should be read by anyone interested in the situation in these countries. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The book is very good, the film was a little different By Sleepyshoe The book is very good, the film was a little different. It was amusing in parts but you were always aware that the journalists were in a dangerous situation. The Author obviously made a lot of good, trustworthy friends in Afghanistan. There are always 2 sides to every nationality and she showed us both.

Now a Major Motion Picture titled Whiskey Tango Foxtrot starring Tina Fey, Margot Robbie, Martin Freeman, Alfred Molina, and Billy Bob Thornton. When Kim Barker first arrived in Kabul as a journalist in 2002, she barely owned a passport, spoke only English and had little idea how to do the "Taliban Shuffle" between Afghanistan and Pakistan. No matter—her stories about Islamic militants and shaky reconstruction were soon overshadowed by the bigger news in Iraq. But as she delved deeper into Pakistan and Afghanistan, her love for the hapless countries grew, along with her fear for their future stability. In this darkly comic and unsparing memoir, Barker uses her wry, incisive voice to expose the absurdities and tragedies of the "forgotten war," finding humor and humanity amid the rubble and heartbreak.

.com Kim Barker was The Chicago Tribune's South Asia Bureau Chief from 2004 to 2009, much of which she spent living in and reporting from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban Shuffle comprises her recollections of these years, but make no mistake: this is not your parents' war correspondent's memoir. In fact, to hear this charismatic debut author tell of life in war-torn Kabul during these years, you'd think it was a more-or-less non-stop party. Journalism is famously known as a business for which "if it bleeds, it leads," and with a fresh war raging in Iraq, Barker initially faced long stretches of relative quiet. As a result, an absurd, often promiscuous subculture grew up among her fellow reporters. (Think M*A*S*H with a dash of Catch-22.) Of course, it wasn't all fun, games, and the occasional heavy petting. Barker's reporting eventually brings her into contact with warlords, fundamentalists, and drug kingpins, and she does get blood on her hands (quite literally). As the action heats up and the Taliban begins slowly to regroup, she finds herself reporting on and fending off a host of unsavory types, from anonymous gropers in crowded streets to former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who woos her shamelessly, breaking all manner of internationally recognized rules of professional decorum. After five years of these "Strange Days in Afghanistan and Pakistan," Barker finally returns to the States with a one-of-a-kind memoir, a true story that's rife with both black humor and brutal honesty about the absurdities of war. --Jason Kirk From Booklist War correspondent Barker first started reporting from Afghanistan in 2003, when the war there was lazy and insignificant. She was just learning to navigate Afghan culture, one caught between warring factions, and struggling to get space in her newspaper, the Chicago Tribune. Lulled into complacency, everyone from the U.S. military to the Afghan diplomatic corps to the Pakistani government stumbled as the Taliban regrouped. Very frank and honest, Barker admits a host of mistakes, including gross cultural ignorance that often put her in danger even as she found Afghanistan similar in some ways to Montana, her home state, what with ?bearded men in pickup trucks stocked with guns and hate for the government.? She reports a string of characters: an amorous Pakistani former prime minister, a flashy Afghan American diplomat, an assortment of warlords, drug lords, fundamentalists, politicians, and fellow correspondents struck by wanderlust and plagued by

messy personal lives?all of them against a backdrop of declining war coverage in declining American newspapers. A personal, insightful look at covering an ambivalent war in a complicated region. --Vanessa Bush "Remarkable. . . . [Barker] has written an account of her experiences covering Afghanistan and Pakistan that manages to be hilarious and harrowing, witty and illuminating, all at the same time." —Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times* "The Taliban Shuffle isn't like any other book out there about Afghanistan and Pakistan. It's witty, brilliant, and impossible to put down." —Rajiv Chandrasekaran, author of *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* "The Taliban Shuffle is part war memoir, part tale of self-discovery that, thanks to Barker's biting honesty and wry wit, manages to be both hilarious and heartbreaking." —*Chicago Tribune* "What you'd hear if the reporter never turned off the voice recorder between interviews—brilliant firsthand outtakes that wind up telling us more about the Afghan debacle than any foreign policy briefing." —*The Seattle Times* "At once funny and harrowing, insightful and appalling. . . . The Taliban Shuffle will pull you in so deep that you'll smell the poppies and quake from the bombs." —*The Minneapolis Star Tribune* "If you're looking for a window on the challenges facing Afghanistan and Pakistan today—from a resurgent Taliban to American incompetence to Afghan and Pakistani corruption and nepotism—Barker provides a sterling vantage point." —*San Francisco Chronicle* "Kim Barker gives a true and amusing picture of hellholes and the reporters on assignment in them. But she breaks the journo code of silence and reveals a trade secret of the hacks who cover hellholes: The hell of the holes is that they're kind of fun." —P. J. O'Rourke "The Taliban Shuffle gives us an insider's perspective of Afghanistan and Pakistan—their fascinating cultures, unstable governments, and burgeoning terrorist groups. . . . With dark, self-deprecating humor and shrewd insight, Barker chronicles her experiences as a rookie foreign reporter and the critical years when the Taliban resurged amidst the collapse of the Afghan and Pakistani governments." —*The Daily Beast* "Politically astute and clearly influenced by Hunter S. Thompson, Barker provides sharp commentary on the impotence of American foreign policy in South Asia after the victory against the Taliban. . . . Fierce, funny and unflinchingly honest." —*Kirkus* "Reveals many enduring truths. . . . Novel both for its humor and for its perspective . . . it rises (or sinks) to levels of seriousness that will be remembered long after the po-faced analysis of other writers has been forgotten." —*The National* "Brilliant, tender, and unexpectedly hilarious." —*Marie Claire* "Candid and darkly comic. . . . With self-deprecation and a keen eye for the absurd, Barker describes her evolution from a green, fill-in correspondent to an adrenaline junkie." —*Publisher's Weekly* "The Taliban Shuffle is Scoop meets Dispatches, remixed with a twenty-first-century Bollywood soundtrack. Laugh-out-loud funny, it is the true story of what it is like to be a female journalist in one of the world's most exotic war zones, while telling the reader much about what is really going on today in Afghanistan and Pakistan." —Peter Bergen, author of *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and Al-Qaeda* "[An] immensely entertaining memoir." —*The Boston Globe* "Yes, there are bombs. And there is carnage. And all sorts of mayhem. But mostly there are people, human beings even, with appetites—for life, for adventure, for riches, for love. Ms. Barker offers this world—the human world caught in the crosshairs of history—with a vitality rarely seen in accounts of the war. A compelling read that offers readers a glimpse of the goings-on behind the byline." —J. Maarten Troost, author of *The Sex Lives of Cannibals*